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UNCLAS DHAKA 000715

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MORE PROTESTS PLANNED AGAINST DANISH AND EUROPEAN
EMBASSIES OVER CARTOONS

REF: STATE 20453, STATE 18503

1. (U) According to police sources, several Islamic groups have planned to organize a protest around the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque on Friday, February 10 at 1500 (after Friday prayers) followed by a march towards the Danish, French, and Italian embassies and the EC Mission. The protests are in response to the cartoons published in Danish and other western newspapers depicting the Prophet Mohammad. Groups expected to participate in the march include the Islamic Constitutional Movements, Hizbut Tahrir Bangladesh, Bangladesh Khelafat Movements, Jamat e Ulama Islam, National Committee for Stopping Aggression, Khelafat Majlish, Nejame Islami, Islamic Okiyo Andolan, Kaumi Education Board, International Khatme Nabuyat Bangladesh (better known for its anti-Ahmadiyya agitation), and Amra Dhaka Bashi.

2. (U) The demonstration will originate from the downtown Dhaka Baitul Mukarram mosque (approximately eight KM from the diplomatic enclave where the U.S. Embassy and emboff residences are located). Dhaka Metropolitan Police have taken special security measures to protect the enclave and have stated that they will not allow any processions or demonstrators near the enclave. Police expect several thousand participants in the demonstration.

3. (U) There have been other smaller demonstrations in downtown Dhaka since the announcement of the publishing of the cartoon.

4. (SBU) On February 8, Home Minister of State Babar assured Charge that the BDG understands the importance of protecting diplomatic precautions. The demonstrators, he underscored, would not be allowed to enter the diplomatic enclave.

5. (SBU) RSO Actions: Post has worked with the Danish Embassy to ensure that all possible security measures are in place. RSO staff visited the Danish Embassy and observed that upwards of 80 armed police are now stationed there in addition to a mobile vehicle patrol. The Danish Embassy uses contract guards for their facility and residences. Furthermore, pedestrian screening procedures by a local contract guard seem to be adequate. The Danish official responsible for security was handed all possible telephone numbers for local authorities should there be a problem and phone numbers for the RSO staff should they not be able to reach local authorities.

6. (SBU) RSO, in addition to Consular, has issued a security notice advising post personnel to avoid the affected areas of downtown due to the protests. While police have traditionally kept protesters from marching into the diplomatic enclave, RSO assets will monitor and advise RSO and Post 1 should the protesters manage to threaten the perimeter.

7. (U) Point of contact is Regional Security Office Dhaka, 8802-885-5500 X2228.

CHAMMAS